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CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN

DEBATES

Thursday, 14th August, 1947

OFFICIAL REPORT

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CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN

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HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S ADDRESS TO THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN

His Excellency the Governor-General of India (Lord Louis Mountbatten of Burma) having arrived in procession with the President of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan (Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah) took his seat on the Dais at ten minutes after Nine of the Clock.

His Excellency the Governor-General: Mr. President and Members of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, I have a message from His Majesty the King to deliver to you today. This is His Majesty's message.

"I send you my greetings and warmest wishes on this great occasion when the new Dominion of Pakistan is about to take its place in the British Commonwealth of Nations. In thus achieving your independence by agreement, you have set an example to all freedom-loving people throughout the world.

I know that I can speak for all sections of opinion within the British Commonwealth when I say that their support will not fail you in upholding democratic principles. I am confident that the statesmanship and the spirit of co-operation which have led to the historic developments you are now celebrating will be the best guarantee of your future happiness and prosperity.

Great responsibilities lie ahead of you and your leaders. May the blessings of the Almighty sustain you in all your future tasks. Be assured always of my sympathy and support as I watch your continuing efforts to advance the cause of humanity."

I am speaking to you today as your Viceroy. Tomorrow the Government of the new Dominion of Pakistan will rest in your hands and I shall be the constitutional head of your neighbour, the Dominion of India.

The leaders of both Governments, however, have invited me to be the independent chairman of the Joint Defence Council. This is an honour which I shall strive to merit.

Tomorrow two new sovereign States will take their place in the Commonwealth: not young nations, but the heirs of old and proud

[*H. E. the Governor-General.*]

civilisations : fully independent States, whose leaders are statesmen, already known and respected throughout the world, whose poets and philosophers, scientists and warriors have made their imperishable contribution to the service of mankind : not immature governments or weak, but fit to carry their great share of responsibility for the peace and progress of the world.

The birth of Pakistan is an event in history. We, who are part of history, and are helping to make it, are not well-placed, even if we wished, to moralise on the event, to look back and survey the sequence of the past that led to it.

History seems sometimes to move with the infinite slowness of a glacier, and sometimes to rush forward in a torrent. Just now, in this part of the world our united efforts have melted the ice and moved some impediments in the stream, and we are carried onwards in the full flood. There is no time to look back. There is time only to look forward.

I wish to pay tribute to the great men, your leaders, who helped to arrive at a peaceful solution for the transfer of power.

Here I would like to express my tribute to Mr. Jinnah. Our close personal contact, and the mutual trust and understanding that have grown out of it, are, I feel, the best of omens for future good relations. He has my sincere good wishes as your new Governor-General.

Moral courage is the truest attribute of greatness, and the men who have allowed the paramount need for agreement and a peaceful solution to take precedence over the hopes and claims they so strongly held and keenly felt, have shown moral courage in a high degree.

I wish to acknowledge, too, the help of others; of the men who advised and assisted the process of negotiation; of the men who kept the machinery of administration running under great difficulties, of the men who have worked day and night to solve the innumerable problems of partition.

All this has been achieved with toil and sweat. I wish I could say also without tears and blood, but terrible crimes have been committed. It is justifiable to reflect, however, that far more terrible things might have happened if the majority had not proved worthy of the high endeavour of their leaders, or had not listened to that great appeal which Mr. Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi together made, and which the respective future Governments reiterated in a Statement made by the Partition Council.

May I remind you of the terms of that Statement? The two Governments declared that "it is their intention to safeguard the legitimate interests of all citizens, irrespective of religion, caste or sex. In the exercise of their normal civic rights all citizens will be regarded as equal

and both Governments will assure to all people within their territories the exercise of liberties such as freedom of speech, the right to form associations, the right to worship in their own way and the protection of their language and culture.

Both Governments further undertake that there shall be no discrimination against those who, before August 15th, may have been political opponents."

The honouring of these words will mean nothing less than a Charter of liberty for a fifth of the human race.

Some days ago I went to Lahore. From the reports I had received I expected to witness a scene of unparalleled devastation. Those of you who have not visited Lahore will be relieved to hear that the destruction is far less than I expected. It amounts to not more than eighteen houses per thousand of the whole municipal area.

I do not say this in extenuation of the madness which caused even so much wanton damage. Rather I wish to pay my tribute, and ask you to do the same, to those who have saved Lahore from complete ruin: to the police and fire services, to the soldiers and the civil administration, and to all public-spirited citizens, who resisted or prevented the powers of destruction; also to the many who helped to tend and heal the tragic victims wherever these outrages have occurred.

The ideal of public service which inspired these men and women, the spirit of co-operation and compromise which inspired your leaders, these are political and civic virtues that make a nation great, and preserve it in greatness. I pray that you may practise them always.

Now the time has come to bid you farewell—on behalf of His Majesty's Government, on behalf of my country, and on behalf of myself: also on behalf of my wife, whose thoughts and prayers will be so much with the women in Pakistan.

This is a parting between friends, who have learned to honour and respect one another, even in disagreement. It is not an absolute parting, I rejoice to think, not an end of comradeship. Many of my countrymen for generations, have been born in this country, many lived their lives here: and many have died here. Some will remain for trade and commerce; and others in Government service and in the armed forces who count it an honour that they have been invited to serve you.

During the centuries that British and Indians have known one another, the British mode of life, customs, speech and thought have been profoundly influenced by those of India—more profoundly than has often been realised.

[*H. E. The Governor-General*]

May I remind you that, at the time when the East India Company received its Charter, nearly four centuries ago, your great Emperor Akbar was on the throne, whose reign was marked by perhaps as great a degree of political and religious tolerance, as has been known before or since.

It was an example by which, I honestly believe, generations of our public men and administrators have been influenced. Akbar's tradition has not always been consistently followed, by British or Indians, but I pray, for the world's sake, that we will hold fast, in the years to come, to the principles that this great ruler taught us.

May Pakistan prosper always! May her citizens be blessed with health and happiness; may learning and the arts of peace flourish in her boundaries, and may she continue in friendship with her neighbours and with all nations of the world!

PRESIDENT'S REPLY

***Mr. President :** Your Excellency, I thank His Majesty the King on behalf of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly and myself for his gracious message. I know great responsibilities lie ahead, and I naturally reciprocate his sentiments and we greatly appreciate his assurance of sympathy and support, and I hope that you will please communicate to His Majesty our assurance of good-will and friendship for the British nation and him as the crowned head of the British Government.

I thank Your Excellency for your expressions of good-will and good wishes for the future of Pakistan. It will be our constant effort to work for the welfare and well-being of all the communities in Pakistan, and I hope that every one would be inspired by the ideas of public service, and they will be imbued with the spirit of co-operation and will show their political and civic virtues which go to make a great nation.

I once more thank you and Lady Mountbatten for your kindness and good wishes. Yes, we are parting as friends and I sincerely hope that we shall remain friends.

I wish to say that we appreciate the spirit in which those in the Government service at present and in the Armed Forces and others have so willingly and ungrudgingly volunteered themselves provisionally to serve Pakistan. As servants of Pakistan we shall make them happy and they will be treated equally with our nationals. The tolerance and good-will that the great Emperor Akbar showed to all the non-Muslims is not of recent origin. It dates back thirteen centuries ago when our Prophet not only by words but by deeds treated the Jews and Christians handsomely after he had conquered them. He showed to them the utmost tolerance and regard and respect for their faith and beliefs. The whole

*Speech not corrected by the Honourable the President.

history of Muslims, wherever they ruled, is replete with those humane and great principles which should be followed and practised by us.

Finally, I thank you for your good wishes for Pakistan, and I assure you that we shall not be wanting in friendly spirit with our neighbours and with all the nations of the world.

Before I conclude I wish to express our thanks for some of the messages of good-will and friendship that have been received. The first one is from President Truman on behalf of the great American nation; the second is from Egypt, third from France, fourth from Syria and fifth from Nepal, our neighbour. I am sure you will all join me in expressing our cordial thanks for these friendly messages that have been received from these countries.

Now I have to conclude the proceedings of this Assembly, and it now stands adjourned *sine die*.

The Assembly then adjourned *sine die*.

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